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Letter dated 5 August 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward herewith the concept note for the Security Council briefing on the global response to the 2013 Ebola virus disease outbreak, scheduled to be held on Thursday, 13 August 2015 (see annex).

It would be appreciated if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) U. Joy **Ogwu**
Ambassador and Permanent Representative

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Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 5 August 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the Security Council briefing on peace and security in Africa: the global response to the 2013 Ebola virus disease outbreak

Background

Nigeria proposes to convene a briefing on 13 August 2015 on the global response to the 2013 Ebola virus disease outbreak in West Africa. The epidemic, initially centred on Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, not only threatened peace and security in West Africa and Africa, but indeed had implications for the security of the world at large. This underscores the transnational nature of the pandemic.

It will be recalled that the first case in the outbreak of Ebola virus disease was recorded in Guinea in December 2013 and the outbreak spread to the contiguous countries of Liberia and Sierra Leone. Reported cases in Nigeria, Senegal and Mali, originating from outside those countries, were successfully contained.

International response to the Ebola Virus Disease outbreak

Despite an initially slow global response, the international community quickly mobilized efforts to combat Ebola virus disease. The appearance of cases in the United States of America and Europe indicated that the outbreak was a threat to international peace and security.

The Ebola outbreak significantly affected three of the six countries on the United Nations peacebuilding agenda, making them even more vulnerable. The Peacebuilding Commission immediately shifted its focus to creating awareness of the possible implications of the pandemic for peace, stability and social cohesion. The Commission, at its meetings in August, September and November 2014, drew the attention of the international community to the humanitarian implications of the outbreak and its long-term implications for the well-being of the affected countries. The Commission called for urgent action to roll back the disease. Relevant United Nations agencies, international, regional and subregional organizations, national governments and other stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, responded positively by enhancing emergency operations in the affected countries. Public and private sector partners also collaborated to accelerate the development of remedies.

The international conference on Ebola convened by the Secretary-General and other key stakeholders on 10 July 2015 was a further effort by the United Nations to draw the attention of the international community to the critical needs of the affected countries. The conference also considered how to mobilize accelerated support for ending the Ebola epidemic and strengthening health systems in the countries concerned. Significantly, the conference encouraged financial commitments to assist the affected countries in their efforts to promote socioeconomic recovery and sustain the fight against the disease.

Regional and subregional initiatives

The immediate socioeconomic impacts of the outbreak of Ebola virus disease on the three most affected countries prompted the Mano River Union, a subregional organization comprising Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, to call for coordinated action among the member States. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union responded expeditiously to the Ebola outbreak by calling on their respective member States to also act in a coordinated and coherent manner to stop the spread of the virus. Together, the African Union and ECOWAS deployed a significant number of health-care workers to assist medical efforts in the most affected countries.

The commitment of those regional and subregional organizations clearly demonstrates that regional arrangements have a crucial role to play in combating the ongoing threat of Ebola virus disease and future health emergencies. The crisis has without doubt provided a unique opportunity for the regional actors to continue to work with the rest of the international community and relevant stakeholders, especially the World Health Organization (WHO), to systematically combat the epidemic.

This point was reinforced by a major report issued by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) earlier this year, entitled *Recovering from the Ebola Crisis*. The report concludes that a "regional perspective could have greatly enhanced the effectiveness of the response" to Ebola. The report recommends measures such as joint investigation missions, sharing of best practices between bordering districts, and establishing a bio-safety protection level 4 laboratory.

African institutions have a pivotal role to play in managing the Ebola epidemic and have indeed made significant commitments to combat it. The African Development Bank has pledged an estimated US$ 525 million to the Ebola response, making it the fourth largest donor after the World Bank, the United States and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The World Bank and Mano River Union member States have agreed to foster measures to strengthen subregional disease surveillance and response. Those measures include cross-border information sharing and joint border management in rural areas where animal-borne diseases are most likely to emerge. There is also a proposal to establish a West African Centre for Disease Control.

Relevant United Nations agencies, international, regional and subregional organizations, national governments and other stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, have responded positively in several ways by enhancing emergency operations in the affected countries. Public and private sector partners also collaborated to accelerate the development of remedies.

The Security Council and the 2013 Ebola virus disease outbreak

Following the declaration by WHO of the 2014 Ebola virus disease outbreak as a public health emergency of international concern, the Security Council adopted resolution 2177 (2014), in which, among other things, it described the Ebola outbreak in West Africa as a threat to international peace and security. In the resolution, the Council called for a comprehensive response to the epidemic and urged Member States to support the affected countries in intensifying preventive and response activities and to allot adequate capacity to prevent future outbreaks.

Also in resolution 2177 (2014), the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to help ensure that all relevant United Nations system entities, including WHO, in accordance with their respective mandates, accelerate their response to the Ebola outbreak. Accordingly, the Secretary-General established the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) on 19 September 2014 to coordinate the United Nations response to the pandemic. UNMEER was the first-ever United Nations mission devoted solely to addressing a health crisis. The Mission played a critical role in coordinating the efforts of the international community to fight Ebola. The focus of United Nations efforts is "getting to zero and staying at zero". This is a challenge that must be met.

The current situation

The three most affected countries, with the support of the international community, have made significant achievements in the fight against Ebola. Consequently, they have witnessed a remarkable drop in the number of new cases. While Liberia was declared Ebola-free on 9 May 2015, the new case of 28 June highlights the need for caution. Similar reports of new cases have been made in Sierra Leone and Guinea. These developments should send a clear message that the international community must remain vigilant until the virus is completely eliminated.

Issues to consider

The briefing will present an opportunity to discuss the achievements in the fight against Ebola virus disease and how they can be consolidated. It will also draw attention to the need for the international community to mobilize support for the ongoing Ebola recovery strategies as enunciated in the UNDP report. The briefing will also allow an assessment of the current situation in the three most affected countries.

Member States may wish to consider the following points in their statements:

- The response by the international community when the Ebola epidemic broke out in the three West African countries
- The impact of weak health systems and inadequate basic public health infrastructure
- The need for high levels of vigilance to facilitate detection of cross-border cases and the importance of treating first confirmed cases as a national emergency
- The importance of having a coordinated approach and support at the local/district, national, subregional, regional and international levels
- Support for the affected States and States in similar circumstances to build critical infrastructure and strengthen health institutions to prevent the Ebola virus disease and other pandemics in future
- The important role of civil society and non-governmental organizations
- Support to national and regional Ebola recovery strategies
- The need for strategic planning for the future

Briefers

- Director-General of the World Health Organization, Dr. Margaret Chan
- Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Ebola, Dr. David Nabarro
- A senior official of the African Union (to be confirmed)

Outcome

No outcome document is envisaged.